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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KRKO](#) [SR](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIA SCENESETTER FOR MAY 25-26 VISIT OF
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FRANK WISNER

REF: SOFIA 681

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Bulgaria has sought to play a positive and constructive role in helping to bring about a successful outcome to the talks regarding Kosovo's future status. Sofia has maintained a balanced approach to the talks and avoided favoring one side or solution over another. However, the Prime Minister has said privately that Serbia needs "special consideration," and most Bulgarians are not reconciled to Kosovo's independence, at least in the short term. Bulgaria sees its role as helping to encourage reconciliation between the two sides and creating a positive environment for the talks. Bulgaria has a vested interest in the stability of its neighbors, which is a key factor driving its interest in the current negotiations. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Despite being preoccupied with EU accession, Sofia has been quite active lately in the Western Balkans--with a number of recent trips by the President, Prime Minister and others senior officials to Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia. Bulgaria currently maintains good relations with all of its neighbors, including Serbia and Macedonia, and is seen by both the Serbs and Kosovar Albanians as being even-handed and objective on the issue of Kosovo's final status. Bulgaria has used its status as an unbiased partner to encourage initiatives aimed at helping to build confidence and mutual trust between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians.

13. (SBU) The Bulgarian Culture Minister Stephan Danailov last December hosted a very successful meeting between his Serbian and Kosovar counterparts to discuss the protection of cultural monuments. Danailov revisited the subject once again on trip to Kosovo May 16 and 17, where he discussed Bulgaria's possible participation in UNESCO programs for the preservation and maintenance of Orthodox churches in Kosovo. The GOB has made a proposal to the Swiss government to organized seminars on decentralization for mayors in Kosovo. Bulgaria also is helping to strengthen Kosovo's administrative capacity by training Kosovar Albanian diplomats and judges. Bulgarian officials highlight the purchase of a sheet metal factory in Kosovo by a Bulgarian firm as one example of the country's contribution to Kosovo's economic development. Bulgaria also supplies Kosovo with electricity during the winter. Moreover, Sofia is contributing to Kosovo's peacekeeping efforts with 42 soldiers and 36 (soon to be 52) police officers.

14. (SBU) Bulgarian officials have emphasized that Bulgaria's position on Kosovo remains very close to that of the United States. Some Embassy contacts believe Bulgaria, given its current fixation on EU membership, would prefer to leave the question of Kosovo's status to the EU and the United States. We suspect that the GOB would likely support any agreement on

Kosovo that is backed by both the EU and U.S. Bulgaria's main concern regarding Kosovo's status is ensuring the continued stability of the region. Officials have taken to heart the fears of others that the final agreement could lead to the destabilization of the region and radicalization of some communities, especially if the result is seen as negative. Bulgarians still have fresh memories of the Balkan wars in the 1990s, which had a devastating effect on economy, particularly for towns along the Danube which have never fully recovered. Bulgaria is also sensitive to the impact that the talks might have on the delicate ethnic balance in neighboring Macedonia. Instability in Macedonia would undoubtedly have an impact in Bulgaria.

15. (SBU) The key factor that Bulgaria believes can stabilize the region is EU and NATO integration. Officials reiterate that Serbia, Kosovo and the rest of the Western Balkans need to have a clear prospect of European integration in order to bring stability and economic development to the region. They consider a road map for EU integration, with its set expectations and goals, a useful tool for the Western Balkans countries to begin reorienting themselves towards the EU. President Purvanov, in a presentation to CSIS last October, went so far as to say that the borders between the Balkan countries, which were the cause of so many conflicts, would no longer matter after EU integration, and that radicalism and separatism would become obsolete. Officials also see Euro-Atlantic integration as an important incentive to encourage Serbia to make compromises. Our MFA contacts have said that a way should be found to preserve Serbia's dignity and that it would be helpful to somehow "fast-track" Serbia's European integration as a way to soften the blow if Kosovo were to become independent.

16. (SBU) Investment in infrastructure is another important factor that Bulgarian officials often mentioned as helping to bring stability to the region. Officials have said that the

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U.S., in particular, could help in the economic development of Serbia by encouraging U.S. firms to invest and participate in various infrastructure projects like the reconstruction of the highway from Sofia to Nis.

17. (SBU) Comment: Most Bulgarians do not accept that Kosovo will or should be independent in the short term; in this sense their "gut" position is closer to Belgrade's than Pristina's. Yet regardless of the Bulgarians' generally positive feelings toward Serbia, the Bulgarian government can be counted on to play a constructive role and to support whatever outcome the two sides and the international community agree upon.
Beyrle